



Fighting for Voting Rights and a Democratic United States

DEMOCRATIC LAW BRIEFS

A Publication of the DC Chapter of the National Lawyers Council

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WELCOME TO DEMOCRATIC LAW BRIEFS, the official newsletter of the DC Chapter of the National Lawyers Council. If you would like to be on our mailing list, please sign up at <http://www.democraticlawyers.org/join.php> or e-mail your name, title, company, addresses, and phone numbers to [signup @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:signup@democraticlawyers.org). We'll happily add you to the list.

EVENTS

DC EVENT WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA

You're invited to a special event at the Capital Hilton With President Barack Obama

Thursday, February 4th
3:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Capital Hilton
1001 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

\$250 per person
\$1,000 per person + VIP Reception (Details upon RSVP)

Click [here](#) to RSVP.



Friend --

On Thursday, February 4th, President Obama will be speaking at an exciting event at the Capital Hilton.

I'm hoping you, as one of Organizing for America's most generous supporters, will be able to join the President on this extraordinary night. During the evening, President Obama will take a few minutes to speak to the Organizing for America community and answer some questions from the audience.

This is a truly unique opportunity to hear President Obama's vision for our upcoming opportunities and challenges.

I hope you can join us. Here are the details:

What: President Obama event at the Capital Hilton

Where: Capital Hilton
1001 16th Street, NW
Washington DC 20036

When: Thursday, February 4th
3:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

You've been an instrumental part of all of the progress we've achieved this past year. Your support has made it possible for the OFA community to continue to push this country forward with calls to Congress, events held in town centers all across America, and conversations with friends and neighbors.

I hope we can count on your continued commitment in the year ahead. **And I hope that in this moment you will take advantage of this special opportunity to hear President Obama.**

Visit this website to RSVP to this unique event with President Obama:

<http://my.barackobama.com/FebruaryEvent>

Hope you can make it,

Mitch

Mitch Stewart
Director
Organizing for America

HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA NOW RALLY - TUESDAY

Health Care for America Now -- the national coalition of more than 1,000 organizations that includes the AFL-CIO, MoveOn, NAACP, La Raza and more -- has called for rallies across the country this week to send a message to Congress that we want them to finish comprehensive health care reform.

We've been writing letters. We've been calling. But it's not enough. The insurance companies and big corporations are fighting back - and they just won a U.S. Senate election and Supreme Court decision to give them even more power in their attempt to block health care reform.

That's why we're having an emergency rally in Washington, DC, to send a message that Republican obstructionism and corporate lobbyists won't stop us from passing real reform - or stand in the way of environmental, worker rights, and other crucial reforms.

Where: Farragut Square (southeast corner of the park, I Street & Connecticut NW)

When: Tuesday, January 26th at 12 pm

We will rally to remind Congress that no matter how much money is on the side of big insurance and big corporations, we have the people. We will fight back with the voices of those denied coverage and those burdened and bankrupted by skyrocketing premiums.

VOTING RIGHTS NEWS

CORPORATE ELECTIONEERING

National - The *Citizens United* decision threatens to bring immediate and substantial changes to our country's electoral process. Most notably, the decision invites giant corporations to spend massive amounts in campaigns, thereby threatening to marginalize the opinions of real people during political debate. As Justice John Paul Stevens predicted in his eloquent dissent, "[w]hen citizens turn on their televisions and radios before an election and hear only corporate electioneering, they may lose faith in their capacity, as citizens, to influence public policy. A report released last week by the Campaign Finance Institute, American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institute proposes a number of innovative and intelligent campaign finance reforms to foster civic participation, including building on the small donor revolution

of the 2008 campaign. Broad civic participation is undoubtedly key to combating democratic commercialization. The Brennan Center's analysis is here:

http://www.brennancenter.org/blog/archives/no_time_to_wait_for_the_effects_of_citizens_united/

and ongoing discussion can be found at the Election Law Blog here:

<http://electionlawblog.org/>

FEDERAL LAW SUIT FILED IN PA

Philadelphia, PA - - A group of African Americans has sued Chester County government officials, contending that the voting rights of black residents near Lincoln University were violated during the 2008 presidential election. The federal lawsuit, filed yesterday in District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, alleges that residents were prevented from voting because of inadequate facilities in the Lower Oxford East precinct. For more on this story go here:

http://www.philly.com/inquirer/home_region/20100121_Voting-rights_suit_filed_against_Chesco.html

VOTER REGISTRATION

Trenton, NJ - It may soon be easier for high school students to join the political process, and the idea has the support of Belleville's schools superintendent. Belleville's Assemblyman Ralph Caputo and Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle sponsored a bill that would require New Jersey schools to provide voter registration materials to graduating high school students that has received final legislative approval. Under the bill (A-2752), each public school board and officials in private schools would provide a voter registration form and a summary of voter registration eligibility requirements to each graduating high school pupil. The material would be nonpartisan and conform to state election laws. The bill passed the Assembly 76-1 in December 2008 was approved 37-0 by the Senate on Thursday, Jan 7. It now goes to the governor. Read the details here:

http://www.northjersey.com/news/state/82224712_Bill_could_make_it_easier_to_register_first-time_voters.html

National - H.R. 4449 was introduced and referred to the House Committee on House Administration. The "Responsible Online Voter Empowerment Registration Act of 2010" provides funding for states that choose to implement online voter registration under the condition that the registration is facilitated through an official public Web site. Read the bill here:

<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-4449>

MERGER BLOCK

Washington, DC - The Department of Justice is expected to file a lawsuit at month's end to block the already-completed merger of the nation's two largest voting-machine makers, ES&S and Diebold. This lawsuit could also block the optical scan voting machines recently approved for NYC. Read more here:

http://www.nypost.com/p/news/business/obama_voting_block_33dUP9gLLkcrF3s2wqOAmL#ixzz0dfst3KpW

PAPER TRAIL DELAY

Nashville, TN - The Tennessee state Senate on Tuesday passed a bill to delay a law requiring a paper trail on voting machines until the 2012 election cycle. The 22-10 vote was the chamber's second run at the measure after it failed to gain a majority on the last day of last year's legislative session. As much as \$37 million in federal funding is available under the Help America Vote Act - passed in the aftermath of Florida's 2000 general election debacle - to buy the machines in Tennessee. But several county election officials, including dozens who watched from the Senate gallery, have raised concerns that costs may exceed the federal funding. Read more here:

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2010/jan/13/state-senate-delays-voting-paper-trail-order/>

NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Indianapolis IN - Legislation that would allow Indiana voters to cast absentee ballots by mail without having an excuse such as being out of town on Election Day is now before the state Senate. The bill cleared the Democrat-led House on a mostly party-line vote on Wednesday. But it could face tough opposition in the Republican-ruled Senate. Republicans have opposed previous attempts to expand mail-in absentee ballots. Read the details here:

<http://www.fox59.com/news/sns-bc-in-xgr--votebymail,0,3221720.story>

VOTER IDENTIFICATION

Virginia - A measure that would require every voter to show a photo identification at the polls is on its way to the floor of the Virginia House. The bill, which passed the House Privileges and Elections Committee on a 16-6 vote, would scrap a provision in state voting law that allows a person to sign a statement affirming his identity in lieu of showing ID. http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/local/Bill-to-require-ID-at-ballot-box-advances-in-Va_-House-82440267.html

DC DLC BRAIN TEASERS

DC DLC BRAIN TEASERS - Each week we have a puzzle or a brain teaser or a trivia question for you to answer. You can e-mail your answers to [editors @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:editors@democraticlawyers.org). Please put "Brain Teaser" in the subject line. We will run the names of all those who get the right/best answer in the following issue.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Several Senators from Massachusetts have run for President; name the two who actually were elected to the Presidency.

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION

True or False: The Heights of Buildings law of 1917 [sic] law specifically states that no building in DC may be taller than the Washington Monument?

ANSWER

False, although the Washington Monument is still the tallest building in Washington, D.C.; the Heights of Buildings Act of 1910 restricts new building heights to no more than 20 feet (6.1 m) greater than the width of the adjacent street. (There is a popular misconception that the law specifically states that no building may be taller than the Washington Monument, but in fact the law makes no mention of it). We had correct answers from Jesse Carlson and Lois Schiffer. Good Luck this week!

WHO ARE WE?

The DC Democratic Lawyers Council (DC DLC) is a group of Democratic lawyers, affiliated with the National Lawyers Council of the Democratic National Committee, volunteering their legal skills to strengthen the democratic process. We work to ensure that every eligible citizen is allowed to vote and that every vote cast in every election is counted. The DC DLC was formed out of a concern that voting rights are increasingly under attack in our country and an understanding that now is the time to put the skills of Democratic attorneys to work to ensure that every citizen's right to vote will be upheld in future elections. Our activities include advocating for better laws and regulations and initiating litigation when necessary to guarantee the fairness of and the widest participation in the U.S. electoral process.

The Democratic Lawyers Council was founded by attorneys who have served on the front line of election law for the Democratic Party in numerous elections, including most recently, the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections. The lesson learned from the recount debacle was that post-election day litigation will hardly ever fix any election injustice. Given that, many of the recount lawyers, particularly those based in Florida, engineered a comprehensive voter protection program to confront and deal with voter and election issues before Election Day. One aspect of this effort was the recruitment of 3200 lawyers who, after receiving specialized election law and procedures training, worked inside the polls in key precincts in Florida on Election Day to assure that every citizen who showed up to vote, was able to do so.

Our mission statement is simple:

We are a coalition of lawyers and others dedicated to fostering universal participation and trust in the electoral process by ensuring that:

- All eligible persons can register to vote easily;
- All registered voters are able to vote simply, fairly, and without intimidation; and
- All votes are counted accurately and all voting systems are open and reliable.

We encourage you to send us an e-mail if you would like more information or are interested in becoming a part of our organization.

Please e-mail us at [erika @ democraticlawyers.org](mailto:erika@democraticlawyers.org).

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GOT NEWS?

If you have news for Democratic Law Briefs, we'd love to get it. E-mail your news, ideas, rumors and thoughts to Paul Roath and Arielle Harry-Bess at [editors @](mailto:editors@democraticlawyers.org)

democraticlawyers.org. We reserve the right to use, not use, edit, paraphrase, or otherwise play with your submissions.

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